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# Muscular Dystrophy Northern

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## Preventing Winter Ills

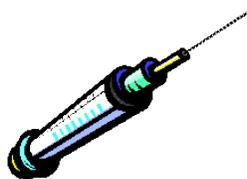
Winter is a dangerous time. While most people think of colds and flu as being a seasonal inconvenience, the truth is they can be deadly - particularly for those with a weakened respiratory system. Every year we lose members to what starts out as a fairly innocuous chest infection but turns to pneumonia.

So what can we do about it? Kristine and I monitor ourselves very closely to ensure we avoid being a source of germs for members. We get annual flu vaccinations, stay away if we're ill, and use hand sanitiser between visits.

MDN members with neuromuscular conditions need to be aware of how to protect themselves, particularly if their chest muscles are weakened. You could lock yourself away behind a moat for half the year and refuse to see anyone... but

that's not terribly practical and makes life a bit less fun!

Many of our members use a cough assist machine, an inflating bag, or breath-stacking techniques to help clear the lungs if needed. Talk to your respiratory physio about these if you think they could help. Better yet, of course, is to prevent an infection



in the first place.

Most people know that an annual flu vaccine is a proven way

to combat seasonal influenza. Each vaccine offers protection against the most common strains of flu for the coming year and this is an excellent way to head an infection off before it starts. It may not provide 100% protection against all strains of flu, but it is substantially better than no protection at all. Your annual flu vac-

cine is free for most members with a neuromuscular condition and your GP can usually send you a reminder each year to come and get it.

What a lot of people don't realise is that there is also a vaccine that offers protection against common forms of pneumonia. This vaccine is less commonly funded but sometimes is, depending on your level of risk so ask your doctor about this. If not funded, the cost is usually around \$80. However, this vaccine offers protection for 5 years, so the cost of protection is around \$16 per year. Well worth it to avoid an unpleasant hospital stay!

While nobody really likes needles, flu and pneumonia vaccines are one of the best ways to protect yourself in Winter. Stay safe, everyone.

*Darian Smith*

### NUTRITION AND WINTER

Winter months can bring extra nutritional challenges so taking time to plan healthy meals will be a good idea. Immune systems get boosted through good food and exercise. Some points to consider: eat plenty of in season fruit and vegetables—apples, grapefruit, brussel sprouts, carrots, cauliflower. Casseroles are a real comfort food and economical cuts of meat are able to be used—blade and chuck steak as well as chops.

With slow cooking methods these can be very tasty and there is the added bonus of filling the house with delicious aromas. Red meat is high in iron and zinc, two minerals which boost the immune system. Legumes (dried beans, chick peas, lentils) are also an excellent protein source. Watch portion sizes and reserve half of your plate for vegetables. Include garlic which benefits the immune system and adds flavor. Don't forget Vitamin D. In the winter months with reduced sunlight we need to get

this from other sources such as oily fish like sardines or salmon. Or you could try vitamin D supplements. Drink plenty of fluids, 6-8 glasses per day. Keep moving, find some exercises to do at home, or find a sport to suit your level of ability. Lastly, don't forget the benefits of friendships. People with good social lives are often healthier and happier. If it is too wet or windy to go out there is always the telephone. Stay in touch with those that increase your sense of well being.

*Kristine Newsome*

# Issues with Access



*“the meeting was to be held on the first floor and no one had a key for the lift”*

When non wheelchair using people ask me about access I always reply that it's fairly good and usually I have no problems.

However, I've recently had two poor access experiences. The first was in Tauranga visiting a new subdivision and show home. I was really surprised to see that the section sales office which had a lovely wide ramp going to it, finished up with a great big step!

From there we went to look at one of the show homes which again had a step into it both at the front door and to their sales office. The sales woman very proudly told me that all of their houses had wider than standard doors in order to cater for wheelchairs, but she seemed to miss the irony that this selling point would be wasted on wheelchair users who couldn't access their show home anyway!

I think it's astonishing that in an area of New Zealand known for its high elderly population that access in a brand new, large subdivision such as this one hasn't been considered. Disabled people are consumers just like everyone else and they deserve to be catered for.

My other experience was at my daughter's school. We were there on a week night for a meeting. When we arrived it turned out that the meeting was to be held on the first floor and no one had a key for the lift. After much discussion a key was finally located with one of the cleaners. They opened the door of the lift and the first thing I saw was a sign in red stating that it was a '2 person' lift only. Immediately that made me nervous because I know that the combined weight of my wheelchair and myself makes me the weight of around 3 people. I had been stuck in a similar lift at my other daughter's school on a couple of occasions and had to be rescued by the Fire Brigade. So with that experience in the back of my mind I decided I wouldn't go to the meeting at all.

The thing I found most strange was that the two teachers who were with me seemed to think that I was being difficult and negative about their lift. I knew they didn't understand the issue of weight when one of them offered to come in the lift with me! How was that going to help? Instead of being one person over the limit we would then be two people

over.

I spent the next hour waiting downstairs in the cold and dark while my daughter attended the meeting; reflecting on how different my experience had been when we had a family holiday in the USA. There were no issues with access there, no need to call any special transport or be concerned that there would be no provision for the wheelchair. This equity of access even extended to swimming pools in the hotel which all had hoists. Bliss!

In the USA the Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (ADA) is a comprehensive piece of legislation that has made sure that access is ingrained into everything and is taken seriously.

My uncle who lives in California is always amazed when he visits New Zealand to see two storied buildings with no lift, as he knows that wouldn't be acceptable where he is from.

I am sure most of our members have 'interesting' access stories to tell. Ones where the so called 'accessible route' is down a long corridor, through the kitchen and out the back!

*Denise Ganley*



Mid-winter lunches in Browns Bay, Swanson and Hamilton.

## MDN Family Camp

This has been booked for 4-6th March 2016 at Ngaruawahia Christian Camp (same venue as this year).

## Outsource IT

Many thanks to Outsource IT for supplying and installing our new server.

## Member Events

### Fieldworker Away Trips

Northland: 7-9th December.  
Waikato: 19-22nd October. Bay of Plenty: 14-16th September.  
Central North Island: 16-19th November.

### Free Razzamatazz Tickets

A 60 minute show for the whole family. Saturday 26th September

at 11am, 2pm or 5pm. Sunday 27th September at 2pm. Auckland Girls Grammar School. Email [Denise@mdn.org.nz](mailto:Denise@mdn.org.nz) for tickets.

### World Duchenne

#### Awareness Day

7th September.  
[www.worldduchenne.org](http://www.worldduchenne.org)